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# TOM CARPER

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## **Bush Should Reauthorize Federal CHIP Program: Almost 6.6 million were covered in 2006**

*By: Sens. Biden and Carper and Rep. Castle - The News Journal*

**Contact:** Bette Phelan (202) 224-2441  
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Every night in America, parents of nearly nine million children go to sleep hoping their child does not wake up sick the next morning because they don't have health insurance to pay for their medical care. In a country as rich as America, no child should go without health insurance, and no parent should have to choose between paying their child's health care bill or paying their monthly mortgage.

Children with health insurance have far better access to preventative and primary care services than those without insurance. Children with health insurance get more routine physical and dental care than those without insurance. They get better quality of care, have better medical outcomes after treatment and perform better in school (try concentrating on your multiplication tables with a toothache).

Since 1997, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) has been a successful state-federal partnership in providing medical coverage to uninsured children. CHIP provides health insurance for children in working families whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but do not have access to employer-sponsored insurance or cannot afford to buy costly individual insurance policies. Since its enactment a decade ago, CHIP has helped reduce the uninsured rate of lower-income children by nearly one-third. In fact, in 2006, CHIP provided health insurance to almost 6.6 million American children. Delaware's CHIP program, Healthy Children, offers health insurance coverage to children up to 19 years old in families with incomes at or below \$41,300 for a family of four. There are about 5,040 children currently enrolled in Healthy Children.

### **Many not enrolled**

Unfortunately, many children who are eligible for the CHIP program are not enrolled. In fact, of the nine million uninsured children in this country, six million are actually eligible for CHIP or Medicaid, but have not signed up for either program. These are children who have no primary physician and no preventative healthcare. When they get sick, their parents must

seek expensive healthcare services through hospital emergency rooms, which is not fair to the children, their families and taxpayers.

We are proud to report that, Congress came together last week in a bipartisan fashion to greatly improve the CHIP and further reduce the number of uninsured children in America.

While there was much give and take among Democrats and Republicans, and even differences of opinions between the House and Senate, we resolved our differences and overwhelmingly passed legislation to provide health insurance to an additional 3.8 million American children. And we are expanding this healthcare coverage to more children without increasing the budget deficit.

Here in Delaware, Insurance Commissioner Matt Denn recently embarked on an outreach campaign to enroll another 1,000 children. The CHIP reauthorization provides grants that increase funding for outreach and enrollment efforts, like those underway here in Delaware, and provides greater coverage for dental and mental health services.

### **Bush should sign on quickly**

We encourage the president to swiftly sign this compromise into law. Our ultimate goal is to provide insurance to all children who are currently eligible for CHIP or Medicaid. This legislation will move us toward that goal by providing millions of uninsured children with health insurance; including 8,000 Delaware kids who can now receive health care coverage. This is a program with a record of results for our constituents and it deserves to be swiftly renewed. When it comes to children's health care, we must not let the "perfect become the enemy of the good." We have a real chance to make a difference in the lives of many children by providing them with health care that may save their lives or prevent future illness.

As your representatives in Congress, we are proud to reach across party lines to renew this successful program. We live in one the richest countries in the world where access to health coverage should be a right, not a privilege, of every child. Reauthorizing CHIP is a great step in that direction.

*Democratic Sens. Biden and Carper and Republican Rep. Castle make up Delaware's congressional delegation.*